



CRS Parent Connection

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services

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CRS uses Facebook page to reach out to youth

With Facebook reaching 500 million members, it has become one of the most popular ways to communicate.

The social networking site allows people all around the world to share information through status updates, photographs, videos, messages, and fan pages.

It has connected long-lost friends, relatives, and co-workers. It has also become a fast, easy way to get information out to those friends, family members, and colleagues.

To keep pace with the growing trend, Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) recently launched its own Facebook page to communicate with youth with disabilities and allow them to interact with each other.

The page, entitled CRS Youth Connection, can be found at www.facebook.com/CRS.YouthConnection.

Susan Colburn, state parent consultant, oversees the page. She said it provides another avenue for CRS to reach out to consumers and other interested parties.

"It is a great way to push information out to people quickly and economically," Colburn said. "It also allows youth to connect with one another."

Colburn is also the administrator of the Facebook page for Family Voices of Alabama (www.facebook.com/pages/Family-Voices-of-Alabama/103452629687751).

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation



Services also maintains a Facebook page. The page, which has more than 500 fans, is located at www.facebook.com/rehab.alabama.gov. Other ADRS pages include one for the department's Lakeshore Rehabilitation Facility (www.facebook.com/adrs.lakeshore) and ADRS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (www.facebook.com/

dhhs.alabama.gov).

If you are a member of Facebook or thinking about becoming a member, please consider becoming a fan of these pages. It is a great way to keep informed about what is happening with people with disabilities as well as a great way to interact with other families or individuals with disabilities.

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CRS Parent Connection

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Parent Connection is a complimentary newsletter published by Children's Rehabilitation Service for families of children with special health care needs. The goal of this newsletter is to increase communication and share information about children with special health care needs and their families. The newsletter reflects a family-centered theme throughout and serves as a forum for family members to share information, thoughts, feelings, concerns, etc. Nothing printed or implied in this publication constitutes an endorsement by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services.

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From the Director's Chair



Hello, Parents and Caregivers,

As many of you know, Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) is a division of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS). You probably have some knowledge about the CRS office in your area, but may not be familiar with how we are organized statewide. That's what I'd like to share in this newsletter.

CRS has 15 community-based offices across the state of Alabama, with one office located at The Children's Hospital in Birmingham. Other CRS offices are located in Andalusia, Anniston, Dothan, Gadsden, Homewood, Huntsville, Jackson, Mobile, Montgomery, Muscle Shoals, Opelika, Selma, Talladega, and Tuscaloosa. These offices are divided by district and have many of the same professional disciplines located in one or more of the offices within that district. There are social workers, nurses, clerical workers, rehabilitation assistants, and a district supervisor or office coordinator. There are also specialty disciplines such as nutritionists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech/language pathologists and audiologists. All of these workers are located within your districts to assist in providing you with clinical medical services, clinical evaluation services, and/or a multitude of wrap-around services such as care coordination, specialty evaluations, consultations, or home visits. If you were to move to another city within the state of Alabama, you would continue to receive the same or similar services through the CRS office responsible for the county within which you reside. Many of our CRS offices also have a parent consultant who coordinates the local parent advisory council (PAC) and advocates for children and families. You may call your CRS office to find out more about the local PAC.

The CRS state office, located in Montgomery, provides support to the 15 local CRS offices. Besides me, there are 15 other state office staff members, including four clerical staff and a help desk assistant (a clerical staff member who assists field staff with CHARMS problems). CHARMS (which stands for Children's Health and Resource Management System) is the CRS electronic data system. Your child's medical history and identifying information have been maintained in this system since 2005. Other state office staff members include a speech/language pathology program specialist, physical therapy/occupational therapy program specialist, audiology program specialist, care coordination program specialist, and nurse program specialist. These staff members assist specialty staff in the field offices by providing technical assistance on a daily basis. There are also two state office administrators who provide support to the specialists and district supervisors as well as to other field staff. Additional state office staff members include the CRS-Hemophilia Program coordinator, who provides technical assistance across the state for hemophilia; and the statewide parent consultant, who provides support to all of the local parent consultants and serves as the voice of our families. The patient accounts manager is also located in the state office, providing assistance regarding insurance matters to you, all CRS staff, and our agency's third-party unit. In addition, CRS has a medical director who is available to the local and state offices for consultation during business hours.

While we have had some turnover in the field and have recently been able to replace many of those staff members, we are also facing changes in state office. We have said good-bye to our patient accounts manager, Amy Weldon, who has taken a position in the ADRS Computer Services division. You may remember Amy as the staff member who helped you with an

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CRS provides electronic plan of care

Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) serves a variety of families who have a vast array of needs.

To ensure continuity of care from consumer to consumer, the program recently rolled out a "comprehensive electronic plan of care," a new page in the CHARMS case management system that care coordinators must complete for all clients. The page provides a checklist of sorts that helps the care coordinator map out the short- and long-term plans for any care that the child and its family will receive.

"It's a one-size-fits-all assessment for families," said Wanda Ross, care coordination program specialist. "It's our way of making sure that care coordinators are on the same page."

The assessment asks care coordinators to consider all types of factors that might affect or influence treatment of the consumer's disability, from the individual's social or financial needs to developmental and independent living skills. The care coordinator then ensures that addressing those needs is a part of the consumer's plan of care.

Other CRS staff members – including physical therapists, occupational therapists, audiologists, and nutritionists – also have access to each consumer's plan.

"All discipline staff will be able to see



Wanda Ross, care coordination program specialist, explains the electronic plan of care to new CRS care coordination staff

what we are doing for each child," Ross said. "Everything will be driven by this single assessment tool."

Over the past few weeks, care coordinators have begun contacting the families of current consumers to ensure that each has a plan in place. Within two years, all consumers should have a plan, she said.

Ross explained the new tool to a group of CRS families at a recent Parent Advisory

Committee (PAC) meeting. The response was positive, she said.

"Parents were very supportive," she said.

The move also aligns with one of Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services Commissioner Cary Boswell's goals for the department.

"He wants us to emphasize continuous improvement," she said, "and this is one way CRS is doing that."



New Staff

CRS recently hired six care coordinators to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities throughout the state. From left to right, Constance Phillips, Selma; Bridget Gilley, The Children's Hospital; Pamela Melton, The Children's Hospital; Kathy Thomas, Huntsville; Glenda Vansandt, Selma; and Carmen Cooper-Davis, Andalusia. Phillips, Gilley, Melton, Vansandt, and Cooper-Davis are all social workers, while Thomas is a nurse.

Housecleaning? Don't toss these important records

School's out, spring's gone, taxes are filed and it's time to clean out the study/spare room. You're probably thinking about whether you can throw away all those files and boxes of old records. We're all supposed to "go green," right?

Parents of a child with special needs or individuals who had special needs as a child, however, should carefully consider which records to place in the recycle bin and which records to maintain and re-label. Counterintuitive as it may seem, hoarding sometimes helps. Even if eligibility for government benefits or other programs is not a concern at this time, some records may be critically important in the future.

The guiding principle of the record retention strategy is "Hope for the best but plan for the worst." While many children with special needs will find jobs that enable them to be self-sufficient or pursue educational goals and then start careers, others may rely on public benefit programs.

Many public benefit programs require proof that a person had a disability prior to reaching the age of 22. A person might need documentation of such a condition to acquire appropriate accommodations in vocational training or college, which may one day lead to a career or the fulfillment of educational goals. Others may need to document when a childhood condition was originally discovered because a recurrence or exacerbation in adulthood could put substantial gainful employment on hold and qualifying for various benefits may become necessary.

Some of the most important documents that may be useful throughout a person's lifetime would include the following:

- Individual education plans (IEPs), multi-factored evaluations (MFEs),
- 504 plans, and the recommendations for accommodations
- Results of medical exams, particularly by specialists such as neurologists and psychologists

If there was an acute illness, accident or trauma that resulted in permanent changes in the individual's cognitive skills or physical abilities, medical records from this period of time to show the before and after picture:

- Documentation that the individual received services from agencies that focus on individuals with special needs or disabilities
- Records from job training programs or workshop employment
- Letters from coaches, camp counselors, neighbors, religious or community leaders – anyone not related to you whose observations may someday help to establish how different or special your child was
- Letters from employers preserving the story of how your child got the job, whether the job was created or tailor-made for your child, and any problems or issues on the job
- Court documents regarding guardianship/conservatorship, settlements for personal injuries, or orders concerning legal capacity

Having appropriate documentation may make it easier for a person to qualify for invaluable public benefits in the future, including many of the following:

- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) based on the individual's work record or adult Childhood Disability Benefits (CDB, formerly DAC) based on the earnings of a parent who is permanently disabled, retired, or deceased
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Medicare
- Medicaid
- Income and health insurance benefits available through a parent's employer for dependent adult children
- Supported living and other benefits through public Developmental Disability boards
- Medicaid Waiver programs
- Military Survivor Benefits Plans

Destroying certain records can be like throwing out the baby with the bathwater – they can be impossible to re-create. Keep in mind that professionals such as attorneys and physicians, and even some government



programs such as public schools, may not be required to keep records indefinitely.

Professionals who may have assisted a person in the past may have since retired, moved, changed jobs or even passed away. Schools, non-profit agencies and other programs can merge with other organizations, evolve or even become extinct – making record re-creation a nightmare, if even possible at all. Tracing back through the years to track down the people who might still remember enough details to provide testimony or a written statement may prove futile, even in the age of Facebook and Google.

In short, resist the urge to toss those yellowing papers just because they're more than three, seven, or 37 years old. They may well have more than sentimental value one day. So reach for your goals and encourage individuals with special needs to follow their dreams, but please keep those old records somewhere safe that is conveniently accessible. It is perfectly acceptable to invest in a scanner and build a virtual stockpile of those paper files. If these kids happen to do as well as everyone hopes and have their own households one day, they can do their own housecleaning!

This article appeared in The Voice, the newsletter of The Special Needs Alliance. The Special Needs Alliance is a national, non-profit organization committed to helping individuals with disabilities, their families, and the professionals who represent them. The attorneys are some of the most credentialed public benefits and disability law attorneys in the country. Contact information for a member in your state may be obtained by calling toll-free (877) 572-8472.

Cool Girl Scouts enjoy one hot summer



Girl Scout Troop #1026 enjoys a weekend at Kanawahala Program Center in Chelsea

Nothing can compare to the team spirit that a girl feels while working with her fellow Girl Scouts through the high and low ropes courses.

Well, there is the confidence boost one gets from climbing a 35-foot climbing tower.

But then again, just splashing around in the pool with the friends that you make can be pretty awesome too. Kelsi Moore of Birmingham belongs to Troop #1026 of Brookside, where team spirit is a given and everyone's confidence soars.

The troop had an adventure-filled weekend at Kanawahala Program Center (KPC) in Chelsea this summer.

Kelsi encourages every girl to find a troop in their area and become a Girl Scout.

Girl Scouts really focus on ability and encourage everyone to be the best they can be while helping others! Now how cool is that?

Tammy Moore

Parent consultant, Homewood

Find resources through 2-1-1

What is "211 Connects Alabama"?

2-1-1 is a free, easy-to-remember number to dial for information about health and human service organizations in your community. By dialing 2-1-1, information is much easier to find. Are you facing difficult times and don't know where to turn? Are you looking for help with everyday needs? Are you wanting to volunteer? Dialing 2-1-1 is your first step. At **2-1-1 Connects Alabama**, you will speak with a real person every time. Call specialists will assess your needs, help to problem solve and refer you to community-based organizations, government programs, support groups, and other local resources that can help.

2-1-1 Connects Alabama is:

- A local call from anywhere in Alabama
- Confidential telephone assistance
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Accessible for persons who have special needs.



- Accurate information about community resources in Alabama.

What kind of services can you refer me to?

2-1-1 Connects Alabama provides all people in Alabama with free access to community resources through information and referral (I&R). This access includes personal assistance by telephone and online through a searchable database of services, including the following:

- Alcohol and drug programs
- Child care resource and referral
- Clothing and thrift shops
- Consumer services
- Crisis services
- Discrimination assistance
- Domestic and sexual violence services
- Education – GED instruction, computer classes
- Employment services

- Food shelves and nutrition programs
- Health care services
- Housing – homeless prevention, shelter, tenants' rights
- Independent living services
- Legal assistance
- Mental health care and counseling
- Mentoring
- Military, family and community network
- Parenting programs
- Senior information and assistance
- Smoking cessation programs
- Support groups
- Transportation
- Youth and family services
- Veteran services
- Volunteering
- Wellness programs
- And more...

Just dial 2-1-1

2010 EI and Preschool Conference set for Montgomery

The Early Intervention and Preschool Conference is coming. The dates are set, the location confirmed, the sessions under construction.

Every year, service providers and families from across Alabama and the Southeast come together for three days of learning, networking and bonding on behalf of children with disabilities and their families. The Early Intervention and Preschool Conference is the culmination of yearlong planning and preparation and is a true collaborative effort by state agencies, service providers, families and other stakeholders across the state.

We are excited to offer another inclusive program for families and professionals at all levels who want to grow in their knowledge and skill on behalf of children with disabilities, age birth to 5 years. This year's content has been selected from needs surveys, suggestions from previous conferences, and national/state priorities. Some of the content areas currently under construction include understanding disability, supporting families, functional skill development, and intervention strategies.

The conference for 2010 is scheduled to be at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Convention Center in Montgomery on Nov. 17-19. For updates, visit the conference website at www.ucpconference.org.

Why is early intervention so important?

The most critical years of a young child's development occurs from birth to age 3. In many instances, children born with disabilities miss out on opportunities for growth and development due to family instability, poor child care options, emergency health situations and erratic health care. In addition, and all too often, there can be abuse and neglect that negatively affect a child's outcomes. Here are some facts that we know:

- More and more babies are surviving premature births and are potentially in need of early intervention services.
- The early identification of babies with autism and metabolic disorders has increased the need for services to be provided earlier (i.e., before the age of 3).



- Eighty-five percent of a child's brain development occurs by age 3, but less than 1 percent of Alabama's public investments on education and development have occurred by that time (Voices for America's Children).

- Research shows that children with disabilities who have quality early intervention opportunities require less special education in later years and are more likely to become employed.

Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS)

Currently, early intervention services are provided in every county of the state through Alabama's Early Intervention System. More than 6,000 children are being served. However, AEIS is in a budget crisis. Babies are continually being identified as needing services, and AEIS has less money to serve the babies currently in the system. Without an increase in funding, community early intervention programs will not have the funds to enroll additional babies or continue serving the high number of babies they currently serve.

In 1995, the first full year of Alabama's Early Intervention System, AEIS received \$3,170,604 – or \$1,470 per child – to serve 2,158 babies and their families. In 2010, AEIS has received only \$5,630,888 in state dollars to serve all eligible children. Due to decreases in funding and proration, the state allocation is \$932 per

child per year. That is a decrease of nearly 40 percent over 1995.

Pinning their Future on You

Early intervention providers and thousands of Alabama babies with developmental delays and their families would like to ask for your help. Early intervention is one of the most critical and cost-effective services in Alabama, and additional funding is needed for Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS). Alabama is one of the leaders in the nation in providing early intervention services.

Those who are interested in the future of young children in Alabama are invited to join the Facebook page: **Pinning Their Future on You** (www.facebook.com/#/pages/Pinning-Their-Future-On-You/176505069961). The page is a statewide effort to inform the general public and legislators of the importance of early intervention services for children with disabilities and their families.

All those who are concerned must rally together to make sure that funding for this program is adequate to meet the needs of children in our state. Together, we can make a difference!

If you are not a FACEBOOK user, you may email Dr. Gary Edwards at gedwards@ucpbham.com to receive email updates.

Homewood CRS presents Soup for the Soul

The CRS office in Homewood continued its “Soup for the Soul” training series recently with Ricky Hatcher of the Alabama Medicaid Agency.

Hatcher conducted a presentation on eligibility requirements for Alabama Home and Community-Based Waiver Services. The presentation included a short overview of long-term waivers available in Alabama that offer a wide range of care choices, as well as increased opportunities to receive services at home or in the community. These services can include home health services, durable medical equipment, hospice care, private duty nursing and targeted case management in addition to care in nursing and other long-term care facilities. Alabama has six waiver programs that provide alternatives to institutional care.

The core of the presentation was eligibility requirements for long-term waiver services. Attendees learned that five waivers use the “institutional” income limit in determining financial eligibility and these are the Elderly and Disabled Waiver (E/D), the Intellectual Disabilities Waiver (ID), the SAIL Waiver (must be 18 or older), the HIV/AIDS Waiver (must be 21 or older) and the Technology Assisted Waiver (must be 21 or older). For these waivers, the institutional income limit is currently \$2,022. Only one waiver uses the SSI income limit in determining financial eligibility, and this is the Living at Home Waiver (must be 3 years old or older and receiving SSI benefits).



Ricky Hatcher of the Alabama Medicaid Agency presents at a ‘Soup for the Soul’ session

The SSI individual income limit is currently \$694. The resource limit for “Institutional Medicaid” and SSI-related cases is \$2,000. One point that all attendees were glad to hear was that those individuals who are ineligible for SSI due to spouse or parent deeming requirements related to income and resources, may be eligible for a Medicaid Waiver through Institutional Deeming. Medicaid Waiver Institutional Deeming is a process to obtain full scope unrestricted Medi-Cal without a share of cost for consumers under age 18 with developmental disabilities.

Parents, caregivers and professionals

attended the training and then enjoyed a little time for discussion, questions and interaction over comfort foods that make the “Soup Series” what it has become – a time for inspiration and motivation in a relaxed setting.

The “host” for the series, CRS Parent Consultant Tammy Moore, welcomes all who would like to participate in this interactive meeting. For more information about this and other sessions in the Soup for the Soul transition series, please contact Tammy at 205-290-4572, 1-888-430-7423, or tammy.moore@rehab.alabama.gov.

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insurance issue if you ever called our state office. Amy has been replaced by Sandra Austin, who came to us from the agency’s third-party unit in the Accounting division. Sandra has previous knowledge of CRS, having been an administrative support assistant in the Montgomery district office a few years back and, most recently, working to resolve CRS third-party issues. At the end of August, we will be saying good-bye to Julie Preskitt, who is leaving to join the faculty in the School of Public Health at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Julie has served

as our OT/PT program specialist, MCH (maternal and child health) coordinator, and CHARMS manager. If you participated in the CRS statewide needs assessment activities in your area, you will remember her as the staff member who coordinated that effort. CRS has a professional partnership with the UAB School of Public Health so we expect to have a continued relationship with Julie in the service of children and families.

I would like to acknowledge the wonderful contributions both of these staff members have made to CRS over the past years and wish them the very best in their new positions

and future endeavors.

I hope this information has been helpful as a reminder for longtime clients and as new information for some of our newly enrolled clients. Please remember that your local CRS offices and the state office are available to assist you and your child in achieving his or her maximum potential. Please let us know how we can further assist you in your home, schools, and communities.

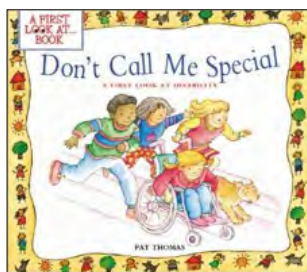
Melinda M. Davis

Assistant Commissioner, CRS

Book Review:

"Don't Call Me Special"

"Don't Call Me Special" by Pat Thomas is not meant for children with disabilities and their families, but is written for children who do not have a disability. It gives parents and/or



educators an opportunity to talk about disability with their children or their students.

It can be an eye opener for children as they learn that everyone is different, yet we are all the same in so many ways.

Everyone has things that may be difficult for him or her to do and everyone has things that he or she is really good at. Children are not only given the opportunity to think about the things that they do well themselves, but are encouraged to think about the things that they need help with. It's about never assuming that someone can or cannot do something.

The book also addresses the fact that people with and without disabilities use things that help them accomplish a task or to get from point A to point B. Children will learn that there are disabilities that you can see and disabilities that you can't see.

For such a short book, "Don't Call Me Special" really packs in the information in a child-friendly way. An excerpt from the book is, "We all need to work and play together. And with a little extra help, children with disabilities can learn and grow and do the things they want to – just like everybody else."

Tammy Moore

Parent Consultant, Homewood

VOICES

of Alabama's Children and Youth
with Special Health Care Needs and Their Families

CRS responds to feedback

Now that Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) has gathered feedback from their family and youth surveys, it is ready to make good use of that feedback.

The surveys were administered as part of the five-year "needs assessment" conducted by agencies receiving funds through the federal Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant. Since CRS serves children and youth with special health care needs, it conducted the portion of the assessment that pertains to that population.

After analyzing the results of the needs assessment, which was due in July, CRS has developed three main priorities:

- Increase access to care coordination services, including transition planning
- Increase family and youth participation in Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) policy-making through support services and education/training
- Promote access to community-based services – such as respite, recreation, transportation, and child care services – for CYSHCN and families

CRS will be working with state and local organizations to get the word out about the priorities and to address the priorities. For example, CRS may go to local churches and suggest they provide respite services while moms have a night out. CRS may also sponsor



speakers, trainings, and other financial support to assist state and local organizations in providing services to meet the needs of youth and families.

"Not all of these services are provided directly by CRS, and we aren't the only ones who provide them," said Julie Preskitt, special programs coordinator for CRS. "We want to foster advocacy and grassroots efforts around these needs at a local level and through our partners so that they can be addressed not just by one organization, but by the overall system of care for CYSHCN and their families."

One thing is for sure, now that CRS knows the priorities for youth and families, they want to make sure those needs are being addressed.

The results of the needs assessment can be viewed by visiting the CRS website at www.rehab.alabama.gov/crs.

Please add me to your newsletter mailing list.

Name: _____

Agency: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Clip and mail to

Susan Colburn

Children's Rehabilitation Service

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Montgomery, AL 36104



Family Voices remembers Polly Arango

The Family Voices network of family leaders and friends suffered a tremendous loss on Saturday, June 26, with the sudden, unexpected passing of Polly Arango, our founding executive director.

We struggle; we grieve. The words to express what our hearts are feeling are hard to find right now. Polly's impact on families and children in New Mexico, the United States, and around the world is difficult to measure or to match. The void her death leaves is immense.

Following are comments from Mike Fraser, the executive director of the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs:

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the AMCHP Board, staff, and the wider AMCHP family, I would like to share our condolences with you as we mark the death of



our beloved advocate, leader, and friend Polly. Polly was an advocate's advocate. Her passion and courage made her strong and convincing. Her intellect armed her with data and facts. Her heart armed her with caring and love. The successes we now enjoy because of her strong, informed, compassionate voice are too many to note here today.

Polly was a leader's leader. A constant beacon amid storms and confusion, Polly's vision for what family involvement and family leadership could be motivated us all to be our best even when we were tired, depressed, forlorn, or dismayed. She had the big picture in mind and painted it in brilliant, rainbow colors for us all to see. The leadership she shared lifted many of us up and made us want to be part of what she started. Family Voices is here today in part because of Polly. AMCHP is better today because of Polly. Her legacy of leadership lives on in all of us.

Polly was a friend's friend. An open door,

a patient ear, a caring whisper, a critical eye. Polly knew the importance of relationships, family and friends. Many of us are privileged to say she was our friend. But what is more telling about Polly is that her friendship extended to those friends she knew she had but had never met. There were no strangers to Polly. She held all children, all families, in her warm embrace and no one was left out or behind.

The news of Polly's passing was shocking and profound. While we cannot express the depth of this loss, we can share the strength she gave us to do the work we are here to do and the calling which she invited us all to join. We are thankful to have had Polly in our lives. We stand with you in celebrating her legacy today. Let her life inspire us to deeper advocacy, stronger leadership, and more lasting friendship with those we love and those we serve.

Michael R. Fraser, PhD CAE

Family Voices, Chief Executive Officer

Family emergency information kits available

Family Voices of Alabama has prepared "Family Emergency Information Kits" to help your family be prepared for any type of emergency, including hurricanes, floods, etc.

By now you have probably seen numerous articles or alerts about emergency planning. You might have thought, "Well, that sounds like a good idea. I'm going to try to do that someday."

In our fast-paced lives, there never seems to be time to really plan ahead. But a small amount of time invested now, before an

emergency strikes, could end up saving you and your family a lot of frustration later.

If some sort of natural disaster requires that you leave your home quickly, taking the time now to gather, record and save vital information, all in an easily accessible place, will make the experience much less traumatic.

That is the point of these Family Emergency Information Kits.

Visit www.familyvoicesal.org, click on "Resources," then "Request Information," and complete the form, and they will mail you

one for your family. If you want to share them with a group of families, just let them know the name of the group and how many you will need.

Family Voices of Alabama provides assistance to families of children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) including individualized information and support, training, and information sharing.

Susan Colburn

State coordinator, Family Voices of Alabama

For information about Family Voices, please contact the Alabama state coordinators, Susan Colburn, 334-293-7041, susan.colburn@rehab.alabama.gov, or Jerry Oveson, 251-438-1609, oveson@bellsouth.net.

Funderful Times – *Art journaling*

Recently, I discovered art journaling, which brings together basic supplies such as paper, paints, brushes and a simple ballpoint pen. The only other thing I added to this list was a bottle of Gesso to prime the paper so that it uses less paint and won't bleed through. Since I love to put layers and layers of paint, this was a wise investment. When I first started art journaling, I thought it compared to when I was in elementary school and we painted with the tin of watercolor paints. Remember those? Now they come in plastic containers with several primary colors and are not expensive to purchase. I remember getting messy and loving to create various things with just these supplies.

I should back up and say that I have kept a journal with written words since ninth grade, when our English teacher required us to do so. I have written my joys, my sadness, my frustrations, my questions for doctors, my grocery lists – whatever I needed to make note of – down in a binder I called my journal. As an artist, you want to stretch your knowledge farther than the mediums you work with at present, so I watched a couple of YouTube videos on the subject of art journals, which led to watching many videos and now a live show once a week. From fabric journals to paper journals, the art has taken an amazing turn.

For fun, you too could do this with your child. School has just started back for the year, right? Well, why not make a journal for the year using six file folders, paper, paints, a ballpoint pen, and some fiber? Take the file folders –



Rita provides an example of art journaling

any size, any color – open them flat, placing them one on top of the other, and use an ice pick or something sharp to punch four holes down the center of the file folder. To create a book, thread fiber, ribbon or thread, through the holes, tying them in the back. Gather some magazines or newspaper, cut into pieces, and glue on all sides of the folders, allowing each side to dry before going to the next. Create a title for the cover with your child's name and add a photo. Remember to write the school, grade, and year on the front.

With each page, add things your child brings home. It can be a fun adventure and ritual for your child to add to the book. You will have all their art, writing, and photos in one place. You are teaching your child at home to play and learn

skills. When my son, Garrett, was in preschool and the early grades, our doctor wanted to see random selections of Garrett's work throughout the year to see how he was progressing and if there were any areas he saw that we needed to address. Even now, I go back and look at our books to enjoy moments of the past and share them with my family and friends.

Art journaling is also a great adult project for you as a parent or caregiver. Thrift stores and dollar stores are great places to find hardback journals where you can record your thoughts. If you don't want anyone to see what you have written, then simply paint over it with acrylic paints. You can embellish the pages or write on them. Ballpoint pens are all I use in writing on top of the paint. I use Gesso to prime my paper and a large bottle goes a long way. However, it isn't necessary to use it. As the caregiver for my sons and now my mother, I use art journaling everyday and it really helps me express the joys and frustrations I feel.

Rita Hutcheson-Cobbs

Parent and caregiver, Somerville

The open book of an art journal is displayed





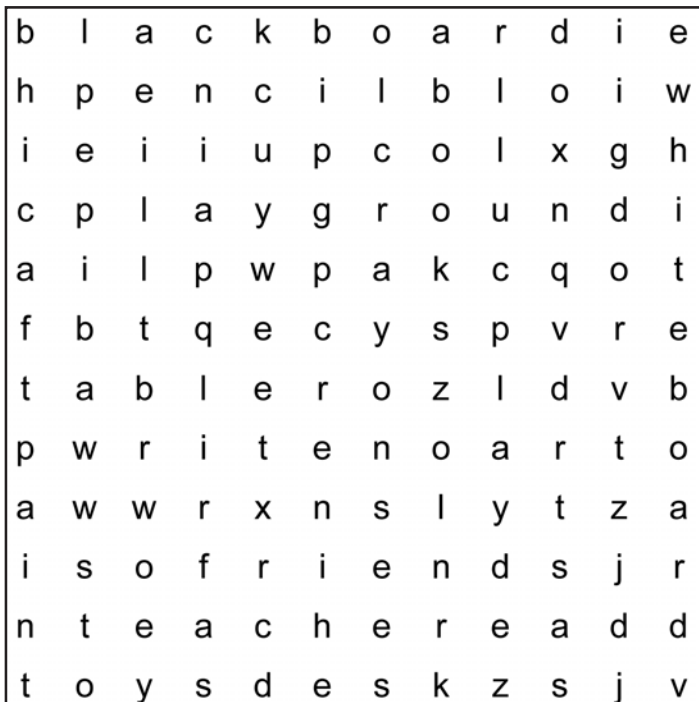
Let's YAC About Ix



In the Spotlight

Zarius Walker, a CRS consumer from Montgomery, is interviewed by Cody Holyoke, a reporter with Montgomery's WSEA-TV. Walker was one of the 37 students or delegates who participated in the 12th annual Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum (YLF). Walker described to the reporter the benefits of participating in the forum during the program's one-day trip to Montgomery. While in Montgomery, the delegates visited the state Capitol building and attended a Mentors Luncheon. YLF is a five-day program that seeks to equip high school students with disabilities with leadership and advocacy skills. The program, sponsored by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, takes place on the campus of Troy University.

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What's Ahead

- Oct. 7-8, 2010** *Alabama Assistive Technology Expo and Conference*, sponsored by Auburn's Office of Professional and Continuing Education and the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, Auburn University. For more information, call (334) 844-5100.
- Oct. 8, 2010** *Staying Healthy and Living Longer Conference*, sponsored by the Spina Bifida Association of Alabama, Birmingham, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, contact Betsy Hopson at The Children's Hospital at (205) 939-5281.
- Oct. 17-20, 2010** *2010 Disability Conference*, sponsored by the Arc of Alabama, People First of Alabama in collaboration with the Alabama Conference of Executives of the ARC; Perdido Beach Resort, Perdido. The theme of the conference will be "Forging a New Civil Rights Movement Declarations of Independence."
- Oct. 20, 2010** *75th Anniversary of The Maternal and Child Health Bureau celebrations*. Look for upcoming local celebrations.
- Oct. 23, 2010** *Gadsden Bowl-a-thon*, sponsored by the Spina Bifida Association of Alabama, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. (12:30 p.m. registration). For more information, contact Angie Pate at (256) 617-1414.

Local PAC meetings: Check your local CRS office for dates and times of meetings in your area.